

Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton's IL 250 Essay Contest:

"Illinois to America: Stories That Shape Us"

Lieutenant Governor Stratton is running a statewide essay contest to celebrate America's 250th birthday for 6th through 12th graders. Winners will have their essays displayed at the Lieutenant Governor's Office in Springfield and Chicago, along with the Lieutenant Governor's State Fair tent.

Students will choose ONE of the below prompts:

- "The Future I want to Help Build- Imagine the Next 250 Years..."
- "My Community's Story- How has your community contributed to the American story?"
- "Many Stories, One Illinois- Share how different cultures, families, traditions, or experiences come together to shape Illinois and America"
- "I Am Part of the American Story- What does it mean to you to be a part of America's story?"

Essays must meet the following minimum word count:

- Grades 6-8: 200 words
- Grades 9-10: 500 words
- Grades 11-12: 500 words

Guidelines

- Entries must be typed and double-spaced in 12pt font
- All entries must be original work created using the efforts of a single person
- All contestants must be Illinois residents
- All entries are due at 11:59pm CT on May 31, 2026
- Entries must be suitable for general audiences and not contain content, images, or other material that is discriminatory, misleading, indecent, obscene, hateful, or tortious
- Entries are final once submitted and cannot be changed or amended in any way
- The body of the essay should not contain identifying information

Judging

- Entries will be sorted by grade level category
- Entries that do not follow the submission guidelines and word count requirements will not be considered
- Entries will be judged by a panel of State of Illinois Employees

Timeline

- The contest opens on April 13th, closes on May 31st and winners will be announced on July 4th, 2026